Re-Examining Values and Morals in Fables: A Comparative Study of the *Panchatantra* and the Aesop's *Fables*

A
Synopsis

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Overview:

Before embarking upon any interpretive ventures, it is essential to throw light upon that offshoot of literary branch known as fable. It is beyond volatility that fable is the most puerile genre in compare to all other literary branches. It is a part of folk literature, travelled across the world more as oral transmission, and less as written documentary form. A fable contains a short and succinct tale of anthropomorphized animals in prose or verse and it concentrates on the implicit explanations of literary, cultural, historical and political affairs. Contradictions among the literary scholars hover in the firmament of fable regarding its origin and periphery. Some say that it is demonstratively of West Asian origin while the others take it to be the Eastern. Modern scholarship, of course, find analogies among Aesop's *Fables*, the Hindu *Panchatantra* and the Buddhist *Jataka Tales*.

However, the proposed synopsis Re-Examining Values and Morals in Fables –A Comparative Study of the *Panchatantra* and the Aesop's *Fables* tries to negotiate how values and morals would be restored through education in the present day materialistic world which is neither moral nor immoral but amoral. For that purpose, it is necessary to facilitate the development of critical thinking, thereby restoring the moral and cultural value. No better overview of genre, at least in a tradition and historically significant way, can be gleaned than what will be obtained from the study of the fable.

State of Art:

The present issue endeavors to explore the importance and significance of moral lessons and re-examine its values through the study of the story of anthropomorphized animals of the most ancient genre, namely fable. The study typically focuses on some fables of the Hindu Brahmin scholar Vishnu Sharma and the Greek slave fabulist Aesop. These fables are the offshoots of inter-connected stories, bearing the highest standards of moral lesson and ethical guidelines. Through meaningful and purposeful story-telling these fables of Vishnu Sharma and Aesop remain as an essential tool to moralize, humanize, educate and criticize the society. They are much like a eyeglass to a blind man.

Problems to be investigated:

The assigned topic typically attempts to pinpoint how teaching of fables transmits and inculcates values and morals in education through a comparative brilliant study and exercise of fables of Vishnu Sharma and Aesop. The stories of the *Panchatantra*, though underwent a little bit modification, bears the stamp of ancient Indian 'katha literature', be it political, moral or ethical. Aesop's fables, on the other hand, offers guiding principles, that is, what we should be doing in our lives. In one hand, it throws light on the form and concentration of art to the natural hubbub of moral lesson and political diplomacy. On the other side, the present study discloses the history of preserving values in education system for future use.

Aims and objectives of the study:

The basic motto and the objective of the study concerned is to unravel the importance and significance of values and morals, being continuously demoted from the platform of the present educational structure. The tales of the *Panchatantra* of the Indian scholar Vishnu Sharma and Aesop's fables are great repository of moral lessons and the education of political diplomacy. Vishnu Sharma, an Indian craftsman, has acquired perfect control of his medium and masterly ease in handling the techniques of bestowing and perpetuating morals and political art. His tales are not only disseminated in Indian territory, rather it is acclimatized in the overseas in different shapes and names. The fables, attributed to the name of the Greek slave Aesop, combined with technical proficiency, render experience and morality. The basic and common similarity of both writers are connected with the issues of moral and political education, though the root and origin of the tales are beyond perception and highly conjectural.

Hypothesis:

The present study seeks to find how the studies of both the *Panchatantra* and Aesop's *Fables* help to explore the metaphysical aspect of existence. Pundit Vishnu Sharma, with his bird's eye-view of knowledge and wisdom, weaved stories which are based on 'shruti-shruti parampara', that is mostly reliance on the memory. This is the Indian knowledge system at Gurukul. The stories perpetuate and engrain holistic education, ancient wisdom, ethical living, concept-plurality and language diversity through oral learning. Aesop's anthropomorphized

animals scratch the surface or wide corpus of ethics and metaphysics. The stories recognize how various aspects of life and philosophy are inter-connected, and cannot be understood in isolation. The present research work is an attempt to find out the mechanism of mnemonic culture and its flickering through the study of the *Panchatantra* stories and these stories of ethical, moral and political supremacy are being annulled for the corporate institution's dealing with the western culture. The study will also focus on the revival of ancient Indian knowledge system as a tool for dominating and restructuring over the post-colonialist cultural subjugation.

Research Design and Methodology:

The approach of the proposed issue is pervasive. The analytical, critical and comparative approaches would be the conducive methods suited demurely to examine the tales and fables through the critical lens of insightful contrastive methodology. The comparative historical research, the disciplines of history and sociology, would be helpful in the present issue. Institutionalized approach, that is, learning by doing or integrating activities will be helpful to navigate the present issue. Comparative research methodology will be subsidiary to access the unexplored areas of the assigned research.

Relevance of the work to the present day problem:

The assigned present topic is too much pertinent to the present day problem because it opens up a new vista of inclusive learning. The study will pinpoint how values and morals will be inculcated and preserved through education. The *Panchatantra* and Aesop's *Fables* are like polestar which guides the navigators in the sea. This research will help in further analysis of the genre and will leave indelible mark in different cultures. The antique Indian value education, merged with the fables, are promulgated through the study. Vishnu Sharma and Aesop, though belong to the ancient genre of literature, are highly regarded great masters in conveying and restoring ethics, morality and political learning. The stories of the *Panchatantra* focus on the social, cultural, political and philosophical aspect of ancient India and how it promotes values, diplomacy and strategic thinking in modern day Bharatbarsha

Plan of the Work

The proposed thesis is deemed to divide into the following chapters:-

Chapter I : Introduction

Chapter II : Literature Review

Chapter III : Folk Literature: Values and Morals

Chapter IV : The *Panchatantra* and its Spatial Proliferation

Chapter V : Aesop and his *Anthropomorphized* Animals

Chapter VI : Conclusion

Bibliography

Chapter I: Introduction

The unusual social mutation, scientific advancement, political and cultural upsurge of the present day transcend and uplift new generation to a quite new academic margin. The growing and flourishing areas of interdisciplinary and cross-cultural studies endeavor to pinpoint the better understanding of individuals. A process of cohesion and dissolution has been observed constantly in everything around us. Despite these burgeoning attitudes, the need for transmitting value education is felt as the only way to restore morality and cultural heritage. The introduction of this thesis will briefly points out the importance and significance of the preservation and transmission of ethics and education through the study of the fable genre, its origin and proliferation across the world. A short glimpse is thrown over the values and morals of folk literature and a comparative study on the *Panchatantra* and Aesop's *Fables* is drawn with an increasing degree.

Morality and Education, though bear divergent meanings, take the same trajectory. The chief objective of morality and education is to acquaint one with a knowledge of having the distinction between good and evil, right and wrong, and thereby open right ways to form a morally good human behavior. That is why moral education is highly appraised from generation to generation since antiquity. The *Panchatantra* stories and Aesop's *Fables* are the fundamental sources of moral education as one epoch follows another. Both fields represent a simple web of meanings produced through multiple strategies of reading and interpretation. Insightful exploration of The *Panchatantra* stories and Aesop's *Fables* sometimes raises questions of the ethical supremacy; but it is no denying the fact that both texts bear the dignity of moral identity. In the present day dynamic and materialistic world, lessons from these fables are highly relevant to sustain value and moral education. Apart from objective narratives, skillful depiction of plots, and better manipulation of anthropomorphized animals, the stories in both the fables bear cultural identity of both the East and the West.

Comparative study involves an academic field in which issues of cultural identity, linguistic expression, national and disciplinary boundaries are discussed with great merit. Understanding of both cultures merge with artistic tradition and similarities are found in writings in the canon of literature. Both the fables – The Eastern Panchatantra and Western Aesopica use animal characters and are political allegory in some degree. Characters of Vishnu Sharma

belonged to the royal class such as kings, Brahmins, princes whereas Aesop chose very ordinary classes of people like hunters, shepherds, and goldsmith. However, the objectives of both the writers are same, that is, to form good behavior and a well- developed personality.

Chapter II: Literature Review

In the canon of literature, the genre of fable has a long antiquity. This literary genre, it is supposed, sprung in Greece around 6th BCE. Divergent opinions have been set regarding the paternity of fable and its proliferation. Actually, the term 'fable' is coined from the Latin word 'fabula' this simply denotes 'a discourse or a story'. In the general sense of the term, a fable is a story or a short and succinct narrative, written either in prose or verse, consisting of anthropomorphized animals and birds, or inanimate objects as characters, pointing the moral or ethics at the very fag end. These characters, given human attributes, represent virtues and vices of people, existing immorality in the society, through the voices of birds and animals. Speaking archetypically, the first collection of fables in Western Europe is superimposed upon Aesop, the Greek slave fabulist and a master of storytelling. There is no definite sources of the life of Aesop; most of the sources are highly conjectural. According to some ancient sources of Aristotle and Plutarch, and the history of Herodotus, this Greek fabulist was born in 620BCE and most of his writings belong to the oral tradition.

Fables have a long pre-history including Aesop's narrative tales. Aesop's successors Phaedrus, Romulus and others elucidated these stories of anthropomorphized animals and birds, scintillating some conducive stimulus through the modern era. The literary relevance of Aesop's fables , the most oldest collection, compiled today, cover around 200 fairy tales and fables , though controversial literary issues have been faced by scholars regarding its embryonic origin. Fable studies developed as a way of satirizing the church, the court, and the ruling classes of the 17th century by Jean La Fontaine, the French fabulist of some degree who found inspiration from Aesopian tradition. The fables have an indelible impression on juvenile mind as these are intended to teach them moral education and ethical values .During this century fable-study addressed issues of political study and communication as expressed in George Orwell's *Animal Farm.*

The seeds of some of Aesop's fable are supposed to find its soil in the Buddhist *Jataka Tales* and the Hindu *Panchatantra*. Though there are some arguments about their mutual influences, it is surmised that Aesop and Buddha belonged to the same period. One thing the scholars admit that the stories were transmitted orally from generation to generation in various vernaculars until they were written down. The fables migrated to other continent including Asia and America. Some missionaries introduced fables in different countries as part of their colonial enterprise. The animal fables in The *Panchatantra*, written in Sanskrit verse or prose, are intended to preach or instruct moral and ethical education with politics. The Portuguese brought fables, mostly from Latin sources, to Japan at the time of their colonial enterprise.

Chapter III: Folk Literature: Values and Morals:

"Man is by nature a social animal… . Society is something that precedes the individual"

[Aristotle, *Poetics*]

Since the origin of mankind men love to live in their pre-literate social communities and to share their experiences of collective learning outcome which shape in their memories. Their sallying out, efficacy, peroration, fanciful learning, selective traditional and cultural practices are intromitted in their laboratory of their mind. Ethnic difference, cultural diversities, the experience of community learning, their socio-economic, cognitive and moral development and many other issues of cultural identities and values have been addressed and transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth. These propagate the literature of folk culture.

Folk literature has a long pre-history. The historicity of the term alludes easy definition. Somewhat vague and fuzzy, it is synonymously used by critics and scholars to refer to that branch of literary genre which preserves the essence of traditional cultural wisdom, spiritual practices and all other art forms, prevailing among the people of contemporary society and is passed down orally from one generation to another. Often they introduce changes as one epoch follows another. The objective of folk genre is that it should be suitable in oral form. However,

later on it recapitulates as an independent literary genre for installing cultural, ethical and moral values.

As an independent literary genre, folk literature can be categorized in two major divisions: one comes out in prose form while the other is transmitted in poetic language. The prose category includes folk tales, myths, legends, fairy tales, fables, ghost stories, household tales, folk dramas and the others. Ballads, songs, lullabies, rhymes, folk metaphors parody and poetic saying come in poetic form. When literature first comes out in written form, undoubtedly it is folk literature which appears in written form. In Europe oral literature appears directly in written form massively in the works of Homer. The medieval romances had the traces of folk culture. In the Middle English period Chaucer had extensive use of folk tradition and re-wording the story-telling characters. We also find enormous use of folk culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. In India appearance of folk tradition is not new. Though a multi-lingual and multi-racial state, it preserves a well-knit integrity both in geographical and constitutional structure. Indian folk literature dates back Aryan invasion. Indian mythologies are part and parcel of folk tradition. However, now-a-days in spite of displacing them in books, it is available in isolated forms in numerous cultures.

Chapter IV: The *Panchatantra* and its Spatial Proliferation

In the arena of thousand years and so, India was a land of the Rajas and Maharajas, the Sadhus and Rishis. It preserved a well-knit integrity both in geographical, cultural, political and educational structure. In ancient India the education system was not a formal type but rather a residential home called *gurukul*. The rajas and maharajas sent their princes to that residential *gurukul* to learn 'nitisastra', the concept of politics, its operation on various levels of ruling kingdom, for a certain period of time. The educational discipline was strict as the pupils had to do what the Guru instructed or ordered to do such like collecting woods, looking after domestics beside learning the 'nitisastra', moral or political education. The whole education system was based on oral tradition, spoken culture as the guru transmitted his knowledge to his pupils through lecture or conversation. The pupils listened to them with rapt attention. At the end of

education, the Guru was offered 'guru-dakshina' not in the form of paying any maternal thing but only thanks and homage.

Pundit Vishnu Sharma was indisputably the most progressive and innovative guru of the ancient *Gurukul* system. He was an Indian pundit and literary scholar per excellence. A certain king named Amarashakti in the state of Mahilaropya of ancient India was obsessed with a thought of his princes' education. He was advised by his chief counselor to consult with Vishnu Sharma for teaching his three dull witted sons at any expense. But Vishnu Sharma negated to accept any earthly material and took a challenge to teach his princes within the stipulated period of six months. Vishnu Sharma says,

> "O King, listen. Here is the plain truth. I am not the man to sell good learning for a hundred land-grants. But if I do not in six months' time, make the boys acquainted with the art of intelligent living, I will give up my own name. Let us cut the matter short. Listen to my lion roar. My boasting arises from no greed for cash… ." (Ryder, p. 15)

In order to teach them the concept of politics and its operation, life, justice, morality and others, Sharma rather used animals as characters to weave stories within stories in the form of fables called the *Panchatantra*. The *Panchatantra* is a collection of inter-related fables, written in old Sanskrit language, in which animals feature as characters to weave the stories with a view to provide moral, ethical, social and political education to the princes from the narrative perspective. The word '*panchatantra*' is bifurcated into '*pancha*' and '*tantra*'. '*Pancha*' means '*five*' and '*tantra'* generally denotes *'treatise'*; and the word jointly refers to the five treatises of '*nitisastra'*, the motto of which is to help for the formation of the wise conduct of human life. The five treatises of *The Panchatantra* include *Mitraveda*(The Loss of Friendship), *Mitralabha*(Attainment of Friendship), *Kakolukiyam* (The Story of Crows and Owls), *Labdhapranasam* (Loss of what was achieved) and *Apariksitakarakam* (To do without pre-enquiry). Each of these five treatises consists of a frame story, accompanied by many embedded stories.

It is no exaggeration to say that the text is translated and circulated frequently since antiquity. The stories of *The Panchatantra* gets well acquainted not only in Indian subcontinent,

but also in other parts of the world where it assumes different names in different cultures. Near about two hundred versions of the text in more than sixty languages are available today. Middle Persian language Pahlavi is supposed to known as the earliest translation on which Syriac translation *Kalilag and Damnag* is based. The was once again translated by Abdullah Ibn al-Muquaffa in 750CE in Arabic language known as *Kalilah wa Dimnah*. The book is also well-acquainted as The *Fables* of Bidpai or Pilpai in many western languages. However, the book has left indelible impression on the minds of the enthusiastic readers, weaving the web of ethical and moral values which are deemed to be needed in the present day world.

Chapter V: Aesop and his *Anthropomorphized Animals*

The constellation of literary artists consists of many stars, but the central sun is the Greek fabulist Aesop in the genre of fable. There is no definite sources of Aesop's ancestry and place of birth. It is assumed that he was born around 620 BCE in Greece. According to the historical sources of Herodotus and the sources of Aristotle and Plutarch, Aesop was a slave in Samos, a Greek island located in the eastern Agean Sea He was a born-deformed but a great philosopher who beat his master every moment in logic and wisdom. He was a slave working under his master Xanthus and Ladmon. As per Plutarch's source is concerned, it is evident that Aesop was sent to Delphi on a diplomatic mission from the King Croesus of Lydia. Later on he was charged with temple theft and was sentenced to death. However, Aesop's literary reputation cannot be refuted.

Aesop was claimed to be a famous fable writer in ancient Greek. The origins of most of the stories, attributed to the name of Aesop, are highly conjectural. The manuscripts, found in Latin and Greek, are translated in numerous languages even in many vernaculars, belonged to the oral tradition until the Modern era when it has got its reputation. Actually, fables of Aesop were translated or circulated posthumously. Still now the inclusion is continuing. After Renaissance, The fables were supposed to the torch-bearers of ethics and were even intended for the child education. The periphery of the fables has been stretched and its ethical dimension can never be negated. It directly enters the adult world and becomes a matter of critical thinking through curving in sculpture, paintings, and many other art forms.

The two most important version of Aesopic canon are Greek and Latin. Nobody can exactly tell the time of its arrival on the Greek soil, but it was before Babrius and Phaedrus. Demetrius compiled most fables of Aesop, putting them in prose. Phaedrus also translated the Aesop into Latin prose. Romulus, an unacquainted fabulist, compiled more than in eighty fables in Latin prose, which travelled Europe in interpretive translation orally in numerous version, and which are amalgamated with folk tales from other sources. But the main bulk of Aesopic fables are found in Greek.

The reputation of Aesop does not rest only in Europe; he becomes famous in Asia and America also. The Fables are translated in many Asian language including Indian, Japanese, Burmese, Chinese. In India the script versions are Bengali, Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, Kannada, Tamil and Sindhi; the fables of Aesop are quite analogous to the Hindu tales the *Panchatantra.* The fables are widely accepted as a piece of juvenile literature and some reveal religious motif. However, as a fabulist Aesop is a central attraction in the galaxy of fables and his fables are used in teaching moral and ethical education, lacking in the present day materialistic world.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

The *Panchatantr*a and the Aesop's fables are the study of the age of folktales. Although some of these stories are still very much with us, they are not actively told in their original forms. In the oriental and western literary traditions, these dubious texts would stand unique and unsurpassed for a simple retelling of the ancient tales. The narrative of the *Panchatantra*, a prodigious literary effort of Pundit Vishnu Sharma, takes us back to the ancient literary history of India When teaching and learning are carried forward orally, that is in listening and telling. The objective of teaching is to promote value education, moral and political learning. Vishnu Sharma, the Brahmin scholar, was hired by the king Amarashakti to teach his three dull-witted sons in the field of politics, moral and ethical values.

In his innovation and creation, Vishnu Sharma codifies archetypal ideas of anthropomorphized animals. The fables escalate old moral values and propagates a great impulse of being good and practicing virtue in the real world. The genesis and development of his stories find new avenue in elucidating the probation of sullen princes. The inter-related stories are

deductive and uphold ethical values and social order. The western fables which commence with Aesop are collections of short stories based on the conceptions in classical Greece. The stories travelled across the world and had undergone several translations and adaptations.

Both the fables are collections of moral stories in different origins. Aesop's fables exemplify the ancient Greek tradition and culture whereas the *Panchatantra* stories bear Indian culture of powerful moral lessons. Aesop's fables are identified with anthropomorphic animals and are popular in conveying moral lessons among the children, though initially the stories responded to the adult world through depiction in sculpture and painting. The *Panchatantr*a is acquainted with its multiple uses of animals and humans as characters and the stories are sometimes complex. Both the stories transmitted orally from generation to generation before they found their identities in written documentary form.

However, both the texts have touch of contemporary education system prevalent in ancient society. Stark difference has been noticed in ideologies of the East and the West when educational teachings are concerned. Both the fabulists dedicated these stories to the maximum heights through animal characters with moral and ethical appellations. Both the stories of oral culture were used in nurturing, upbringing and parenting education in conveying teaching of the littluns and the beguns. Mention may be made in this connection that language serves as an important vehicle in transiting the folk tales to organized narrative form. The *Panchatantra* stories and the Aesop's fables have some similarities and differences inform and characteristics but the ultimate goal of both is to promote moral and value education in general.

Materialism contends that the physical world puts limits and sets constraints on human nature and it can be best understood by using the methods of natural science. Fable study is frequently used by the writers in different ages since its origin as an instructive purpose. Of course, it can never be denied that the basic theme and content have been changed and varied in different times in different geographical environment, but the basic motto is the same.

The *Panchatantra* stories and The Aesop's *Fables* bear some truth of imposing moral lessons on the juvenile minds and the adult world. The chemistry of such moral and ethical values is not so much prevalent as in the fables of Aesop or the *Panchatantra* tales. These two branches of moral tree remain unaffected by the swift wind or big tornado of other literary genre.

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